

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

FAY LEE BERGER ANDERSON RYLAND

June 9, 1949



Fay Lee Berger Anderson Ryland (known as “Lee Anderson”) was born on February 22, 1912 in Holden, West Virginia. She graduated from Catlettsburg High School in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, in 1928.

In 1929, Anderson moved to Birmingham, Alabama, to work in the office of the president of Britling Cafeteria Company. In July 1931 she returned to Kentucky to work in her father’s garage business doing the bookkeeping and office work. In April 1933, Anderson moved to Washington, D.C., and began work at the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (a government agency) as a secretary in the legal department. Thereafter, in 1934, she transferred to the Federal Savings & Loan Insurance Corporation (a government agency) where she also worked as a secretary in the legal department through May 1942.

During her legal secretary work in Washington, D.C., Anderson became interested in pursuing a career in law. As a result, she enrolled in National University in Washington, D.C., in 1935 and earned her bachelor of laws degree in 1939. A brief biography in the 1939 National University yearbook says,

Lee comes from Kentucky, but that doesn’t make her a mountaineer. At the moment she is working as a secretary in the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, but expects to pursue the law upon completion of her legal education. Phi Delta Delta claims her as one of its own.

Anderson continued her studies at National University, earning a LL.M. in 1941. (In 1954, National University merged with George Washington University forming what became the National Law Center at The George Washington University.) Upon graduation, she was admitted to practice in the District of Columbia in 1939 – first to the D.C. District Court on November 14, 1939, and then to the D.C. Court of Appeals on December 15, 1939.

In May 1942, Anderson began work as an attorney at Office of the Solicitor, Wage Determination and Wage Adjustment Branch, U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. In this position, Anderson handled wage predeterminations for government departments, investigated wage claims in various jurisdictions, prepared reports to the Wage Adjustment Board and reviewed wage determinations and prepared decisions recommending reversal or affirmance by the Assistant Solicitor. After a year in this position, Anderson transferred to the U.S. Department of Justice as an attorney in its Criminal Division where she supervised work of U.S. Attorneys throughout the country in enforcing federal criminal statutes.

While working at the Department of Justice, Anderson met Donald Brown Anderson, an Idaho attorney from Weiser. Donald had graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in

1927, practiced in Caldwell, was Canyon County prosecutor for six years and a probate judge for four years before joining the FBI in 1941. He was serving as special assistant to the United States Attorney General in Washington, D.C., when he met Anderson. They married on April 17, 1946. Anderson continued to work at the Department of Justice after her marriage. She was admitted to the United States Supreme Court on June 16, 1947, and the U.S. Court of Claims on April 4, 1948. By August 1948, however, the couple decided to move to Caldwell, Idaho so that Donald could rejoin his law practice. As such, Anderson sat for the Idaho Bar and was admitted as the twenty-second woman to practice law in Idaho on June 9, 1949.

In 1951, Anderson's husband was elected as District Court Judge for the Seventh Judicial District in Caldwell, a position he retained until 1954 when he was elected Justice of the Idaho Supreme Court. During this time, however, the couple appears to have divorced, as Donald Anderson remarried Lois Nichols of Boise on September 2, 1955. Unfortunately, Donald Anderson died tragically only a year later as the result of an apparent suicide while serving as a Justice of the Idaho Supreme Court.

Anderson returned to Washington, D.C. and reentered a successful practice coupled with significant involvement in the community and bar events. In the 1970s, for example, she became very involved in the National Association of Women Lawyers ("NAWL"). In 1973, Anderson served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Women Lawyers Journal*, the quarterly magazine of NAWL. In 1975, she became President-Elect of the NAWL and, in that capacity, was invited by United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger and the ABA to attend a National Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, on the Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice (an event honoring the 70th anniversary of Roscoe Pound's address to the ABA on the same subject).

Anderson married William Hooker Ryland, Sr., a retired supply officer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration during this time, although he passed away in 1988. Anderson remained active in the community and was a generous supporter of various institutions, including her alma mater George Washington University.

As of 2000, Anderson was living in Chevy Chase, Maryland.